



**COMMUTER CONNECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, September 19, 2023  
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.**

**Chairperson: Judy Galen, Loudoun County  
Vice Chairperson: Janiece Timmons, WMATA  
Staff Contact: Nicholas Ramfos 202/962-3313**

**Item #1 Introductions**

*The Subcommittee members were asked to introduce themselves based on their jurisdictional location in order to be marked as present on the attendance sheet.*

*Nicholas Ramfos and Kanti Srikanth, COG/TPB Staff, acknowledge the retirement of both Nancy Huggins, MTA and Fatemeh Allahdoust, VDOT. Mr. Srikanth presented Ms. Allahdoust with a plaque before the Subcommittee in recognition of her professionalism and work during her career. Nancy Huggins was presented with a similar plaque earlier this month during the State TDM Work Group meeting held on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Committee Members all expressed their gratitude and warm sentiments.*

**Item #2 Minutes of July 18, 2023 Meeting**

*Approval was sought for the July 18, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.*

Judy Galen, Loudoun County, requested a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Commuter Connections Subcommittee meeting. Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, made a motion to approve the minutes; Holly Morello, OmniRide, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of the July 18, 2023 Commuter Connections Subcommittee Meeting.

**Item #3 Announcement of New Vice Chair**

*Approval was sought for the new Subcommittee Vice Chair.*

Judy Galen, Loudoun County, announced to the Subcommittee that the Vice Chair Nominating Committee met on August 11<sup>th</sup> and selected Christian Bacon, Prince George's County, to serve as the Subcommittee's new Vice Chair. Ms. Galen requested a motion to approve Ms. Bacon as Vice Chair. Mark Sofman, Montgomery County, made the motion to approve; Leigh Anderson, GWRideConnect, seconded the motion. The Subcommittee unanimously approved the appointment of Christian Bacon as the new Vice Chair for the Subcommittee. Ms. Bacon will also be serving as the Subcommittee's board representative to Clean Air Partners.

**Item #4 Change of Chairs**

Judy Galen, Loudoun County, turned over chair responsibilities to Janiece Timmons, WMATA. Ms. Timmons presented Ms. Galen with a certificate of appreciation before the Subcommittee in recognition of her service as Chair for the Subcommittee from September 2022 through August 2023.

**Item #5 FY2021 – FY2023 Draft TDM Analysis Report**

*Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, presented the updated draft of the FY2021-FY2023 draft TDM Analysis Report and outlined substantive changes to the Subcommittee. The initial report was presented to the Subcommittee on July 18<sup>th</sup> and a comment period deadline for August 15, 2023 was established.*

Lori Diggins, LDA Consulting, briefed the Subcommittee on substantive changes made to the draft FY2021-FY2023 TDM Analysis Report originally presented to the Subcommittee on July 18, 2023. Ms. Diggins briefed the Subcommittee on updates to the document which are focused on the TDM program elements: Telework Assistance (MD), Guaranteed Ride Home, Employer Outreach, Mass Marketing, and the Commuter Operations Center. Changes from the interim report included Commuter Connections activity during January through June 2023. Employer Outreach was updated to reflect the bigger share of new firms as well as newly archived and deleted firms. The Societal Benefits savings calculations were also updated. Additionally, Ms. Diggins reported increases within the TDM elements due to changes in participation.

Overall TDM program impacts reflected in the overview showed that all programs unfortunately did not meet goals. Commuter Connections programs missed the Vehicle Trip Reduction goal by 18% and the Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) goal by 20%. The four program elements fell 17% short of the Vehicle Trip Reduction goal and 13% short of the VMT reduction goal. The analysis showed that shortfalls in individual program elements were related to lower participation and the pandemic. Ms. Diggins shared charts that graphed the data for both the Vehicle Trip Reduction trend as well as the VMT trend. Ms. Diggins elaborated on the reasoning for variations in TDM Analysis findings, which are completed triennially.

TDM programs are likely to offer societal benefits. The 2023 TDM Analysis Report estimated regional cost savings for many societal benefits to include the following: air pollution/emissions reduction, global climate change mitigation, congestion reduction, fuel consumption reduction, improved health/safety (specifically avoidance of car crashes), and reduction of noise pollution. In a nutshell, the report estimates a \$519,419 per day savings projection inclusive of all the societal benefits.

Regional Telework was higher in 2023 than in 2020 but the report only accounted telework related to Commuter Connections actions. Telework exploded during the 3-year data collection period due to the coronavirus pandemic and usage nearly doubled across the region. Commuter Connections continues to be an information source for direct telework assistance. Additionally, Maryland telework employer outreach efforts were shown to have eliminated daily vehicle trips and reduced VMT.

Ms. Diggins briefed the Subcommittee on Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) highlights during this period. There was a dramatic drop in GRH registrants of about 41% from 2020 to 2022. There were only 2,905 GRH registrants in 2022 and in 2020 there was 12,155 registrants. 13,966 past registrants were added to the analysis for retention credit. FY2021-FY2023 yielded 42% more registrants for new alternative modes, 15% of the retained group continued to use new alternative modes. GRH did not meet goals during this period. The GRH Survey revealed that 41% of past participants did not renew their GRH program registration due to increased telework. Mass Marketing analysis revealed lower impacts than in prior years considering Commuter Connections paused most paid advertising in 2020-2021. Even still, 26% of new GRH applicants were influenced by ads to apply for the program and 6% of GRH impact was assigned to the Mass Marketing program element. Pre-FY2021 retained placements were roughly 40% of trips/VMT reduced.

Ms. Diggins then discussed the Employer Outreach impact components which included analysis for overall program impact, new/expanded programs, and bike services. These components were calculated for employers that continued Employer Outreach through June 2023 and employers with new/expanded programs. 10% of telework impacts were attributed to Employer Outreach and the other 90% was attributed to the pandemic. Overall, the impacts for each of the components decreased in 2023 versus 2020. Ms. Diggins provided the Subcommittee with a visual breakdown of the jurisdictional impact calculations which included

total employers, employees, and new/expanded programs. The participation goal for Employer Outreach was met during the reporting period, but Vehicle Trip Reduction and VMT goals were not met.

Next, Ms. Diggins covered the results for the mass Marketing program element. She stated that all of the goals were missed for Mass marketing. The shortfall was more substantial for Vehicle Trip Reduction (VT) and VMT than it was for placements. The direct influence rate was less than half of that in 2020, 6% vs. 14% and the base of commuters was reduced by one-third to account for workers who were teleworking full-time. The VT impact was 67% under the goal and the VMT impact was 65% under the goal. 50% of the vehicle trip impact came from direct influence and 7% was from referred influence. Bike to Work Day, Car Free day, incenTrip and Pool Rewards influence for the measure was 43%.

Lastly, Ms. Diggins covered the impacts from the Commuter Operations Center and Integrated Rideshare measures. There were over 51,000 commuters assisted through the Operations Center during the evaluation period; and there were almost 29,000 new alternate mode users. There were also 6,456 past users added as part of the retention credit as 14.3% were still using alternative modes and this represented 923 retained alternative mode users. There was also over 53,000 teleworkers who were provided direct assistance and they lived and worked outside of Maryland. 4.4% of the non-Maryland teleworkers cited Commuter Connections as their source for telework information. Overall, the Operations Center along with Integrated Rideshare did not meet any of the transportation or emission goals mainly because the applicant count declined dramatically due to the pandemic. Commuters signing up were 44% under the goal. VT impacts were 27% under the goal while VMT impacts were 46% under the goal. NOx impacts were 74% under the goal and VOC reduction impacts were 50% under the goal. However, the non-Maryland telework component for the measure was higher in 2023 than in 2020 which helped to offset some of the loss for applicant credit. Non-Maryland telework accounted for 77% of the VT reduced vs. 48% in 2020 and 70% of the VMT reduced vs. 32% in 2020.

Ms. Diggins concluded the presentation by taking any applicable questions from the Subcommittee members.

A comment period of October 25, 2023 was established.

**Item #6 Regional TDM Evaluation Project**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the data collection activities and schedule associated with the regional TDM Evaluation for FY2024.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the upcoming data collection activities to start during the new evaluation period on July 1, 2023. Evaluation reports for the current cycle will be wrapping up in November. Once finalized, the FY2021 – FY2023 TDM Analysis report will be published and distributed. The next planned activity for the FY2024 – FY2026 evaluation cycle includes the Placement Rate Survey scheduled for release this fall, which surveys anyone that has contacted Commuter Connections through the TDM System requesting information or registering for a program. This survey will include questions related to the incenTrip, CarpoolNow and Flextime Rewards incentive programs.

Mr. Ramfos also briefed the Subcommittee on the analysis that will be conducted on the Baltimore GRH Program that will generate transportation and emissions impacts to share with the Maryland Department of Transportation. Finally, an Employer Outreach Customer Satisfaction survey that is typically conducted every 5 years will survey employers in the regional Act! Employer Outreach database to evaluate satisfaction with Commuter Connections Employer Outreach program services.

**Item #7 Clean Air Partners Update**

*Judy Galen, Loudoun County Commuter Services, briefed the Subcommittee on Clean Air Partners activities.*

Judy Galen, Loudoun County Commuter Services, briefed the Subcommittee on Clean Air Partners activity updates. Ms. Galen provided the Subcommittee with a firsthand account of what occurred during Ozone Action Month. Several jurisdictions hosted Eco Driving Events at various locations. Specifically, Tanger Outlets (Prince George's County), Dulles Town Center (Loudoun County), and Arundel Mills Mall (Anne Arundel County). The main focal point during the eco-driving events were the car bubble demonstrations. Ms. Galen briefed the Subcommittee on the car bubble and the purpose it served during the demonstrations. Some event components included simulated "smog" from the tailpipe of the vehicle cased inside the bubble. She assured the Subcommittee that the "smog" was completely safe and actually just water vapor that was completely harmless. The demo also included Clean Air tips, photo backdrop, dirty/clean air filters and tire pressure pop-ups, big screen air quality trivia and AQI signage.

Ms. Galen highlighted the approach with utilizing head-turning visuals and drive online pledges for Commuter Connections Car Free Day via iPads. Success metrics from the event were provided to the Subcommittee, in total the 3 August eco driving events yielded 16,955 impressions, 5,079 engagements and 948 out of 3,700 Car Free Day pledges.

Promotion for Car Free Day continues, and the Subcommittee was encouraged to participate and encourage participation from others as the last eco driving event approaches Washington DC on September 21, 2023 at the Nationals Ballpark.

Ms. Galen reiterated how Clean Air Partners wants to continue to raise awareness and let people know how to take small actions when air quality is typically at its worst.

**Item #8            2023 Car Free Day Event**

*Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the Car Free Day event which will be held September 22, 2023.*

Douglas Franklin, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the preparations for the upcoming Car Free Day event happening on Friday, September 22, 2023.

Mr. Franklin expressed the importance of encouraging participation in the event. Car Free Day promotes both commute and non-commute transportation by means of car-free or car-lite methods by getting those participants to take the Car Free Day pledge. Mr. Franklin expressed positive anticipation for increased numbers during the event from last year by at least 93% or more.

The 2023 Car Free Day event has six new sponsors this year and several special promotions that include \$30 Nift credit, Capital Bike Share Day Pass (exclusive to Car Free Day only), and 50% off All About Burger on Car Free Day only. Raffle prizes include a Samsung Tablet courtesy of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, annual memberships with WABA, Capital Bikeshare, East Coast Greenway Alliance, the League of American Bicyclists; Metro Bus and VRE passes; gift cards to Nando's, Maverick Bike Shop, Shake Shack; and event tickets from Arena Stage and more.

Car Free Day's \$45,000 media campaign commenced on August 1<sup>st</sup> alongside the website launch. An email blast was sent in August and September to roughly 55,000 recipients. Flyers were printed and distributed to Committee members by request as well as level 3 and level 4 employers. Radio ads ran for the entire month of September and included WPGC, WJFK sports radio and WTOP. Additional media marketing included a recorded message from former Redskins player Brian Mitchell, automated text messages, Spotify digital banner ads, YouTube ads, and social media ads via Facebook and Twitter. Clean Air Partners helped promote the event also as a part of the campaign package. Commuter Connections sent press releases to Committee members. 45 calendar listings were published throughout the region and area colleges and universities were engaged to participate in the Car Free Day campus challenge.

Electronic toolkits were sent to college campuses, sponsors, relevant organizations, minority groups and K through 12 grade schools. Over 10,000 individuals polled received such media ads. Mr. Franklin emphasized the importance of marketing and encouragement on behalf of Commuter Connections stakeholders.

Mr. Franklin thanked the transit properties that provided complimentary advertising space for Car Free Day on buses via Arlington Transit, Metro Bus, Fairfax County Connector, and Montgomery County Ride On.

**Item #9           Return To Office for the Federal Government**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on a recent letter sent to the Office of Management and Budget by COG's Chief Administrative Officers regarding return to work.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on a letter dated August 30, 2023 sent to the Office of Management and Budget by COG's Chief Administrative Officers addressing the current teleworking arrangements for Federal Agencies and in-person work attendance at government worksites.

Mr. Ramfos explained that this letter was generated in conjunction to a notice issued back in April by the Biden Administration encouraging federal employers to aggressively execute plans for employees return to work and encouragement to utilize commuter services to create balance. Without this balance, resources for funding a vibrant transit system would be severely depleted, which could also lead to a loss of economic vibrancy in downtown areas across the region, especially Washington, DC.

**Item #10           FY2025 Work Program Development and Commuter Connections Strategic Plan**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the timeline for development of the FY2025 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP), applicable highlights and the Commuter Connections Strategic Plan.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the milestone timeline for the Commuter Connections FY2025 Work Program (CCWP). During September 2023, COG/TPB staff will focus on program element verifications, identifying program components and as a result, production of drafted bullet points for stakeholder review. October 2023 will focus on developing a draft CCWP for the STDM Work Group to review and comment. A comment period will be established, and any feedback received will be incorporated in refining program elements accordingly. During November 2023, it will be anticipated that the draft CCWP will be drafted and ready to be submitted to the Subcommittee for review and comment; any applicable feedback will be merged with that of the STDM Work Group and final revisions will be made based on the feedback. January 2024, final endorsement for release will be obtained by the Subcommittee and STDM Work group. In February 2024, the endorsed CCWP will be presented to the TPB Technical Committee and TPB for comment. In March 2024, final approvals from TPB Technical Committee and TPB will be sought. In May 2024, funding commitment letters will be distributed to funding agencies and any applicable adjustments will be made to TIP. In June 2024, if applicable, TIP funding changes will be implemented. Implementation of the fully approved CCWP will begin in July 2024.

Mr. Ramfos presented the Subcommittee with proposed work program activity changes. Commuter Connections incenTrip application's federal grant will be over in November and COG/TPB staff will be transitioning the project in-house. As a result of the transition, incenTrip's name will be changing. incenTriplu\$ will likely be the new branding name for the program for licensing purposes for the region.

Commuter Connections will start collecting data for the FY2025 State of the Commute Survey in addition to other surveys for data collection.

Mr. Ramfos outlined changes with Employer Outreach as the program will now expand beyond the previous non-attainment area to include several jurisdictions within Maryland that are outside of the non-attainment area. MDOT Employer Outreach Statewide will include these additional jurisdictions for purposes of using the Act! database. This change will be applicable to any trainings needed and management and monitoring of Employer Outreach activities. With this change these new jurisdictions will be supported by COG/TPB staff in conjunction with MDOT.

Commuter Connections will be conducting in-depth Applicant surveys for the Guaranteed Ride Home program.

Mr. Ramfos also presented the Strategic Plan to the Subcommittee and encouraged familiarity with the plan.

**Item #11 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter CCWP Budget Report**

*Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the status of the FY2023 CCWP final 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Budget Report. Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB Staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2023 CCWP 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Progress Report and the FY2023 CCWP Annual Progress Report.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB staff, briefed the Subcommittee on the FY2023 CCWP 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter final Budget Report highlights. As anticipated in the last review of budget expenditures during the July Subcommittee meeting, there was an increase concluding that the current report accounts for about 79% of funds expended for the fiscal year.

Daniel Sheehan, COG/TPB staff, brief the Subcommittee on the FY2023 CCWP 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Progress Report and the FY2023 CCWP Annual Progress Report. Highlights for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Progress Report include the release of the employer rewards program in the incenTrip application which works with employers to incentivize employees' trips. The Commuter Connections Enhancing Mobility Innovation grant was put in place to improve and further enhance Commuter Connections flexible vanpool program. The traditional Ridematching program served 12,825 registered commuters throughout the quarter. Updates to the Park and Ride lot map were implemented as a result of jurisdictional feedback. TDM System servers were migrated from Windows to Linux, a challenging task but proved necessary. Guaranteed Ride Home program registrations grew by 228 new program participants, 363 re-registered participants, and a grand total of 2,100 registrants as of June 30<sup>th</sup> for the program. Mr. Sheehan briefed the Subcommittee on several marketing campaigns as well as event highlights directly associated with Bike to Work Day, Employer Recognition Awards, Flextime Rewards and website updates.

Mr. Sheehan summarized program highlights for the FY2023 Commuter Connections Work Program in the Annual Progress Report. The Commuter Connections Operations Center processed 6,800 rideshare applications, over 14,800 matchlists were sent, and over 800 estimated daily vehicle trips were reduced over the course of the year throughout the region. Internally, Commuter Connections launched several enhancements to the program's technology platforms, including database conversion and server migration for the TDM System. The Commuter Connections mobile application was redesigned, and several new features were launched in incenTrip, including employer challenges. Commuter Connections integrated the Flextime Rewards in the application and diversified incentive offerings. For GRH, there were 2,200 new and re-registered participants for the program. 630 trips were provided at an average cost of just over \$70 per trip. The Act! Regional Employer Outreach Database was updated.

Mr. Sheehan took questions and encouraged the Subcommittee to review the report in its entirety.

**Item #10 Other Business/Set Agenda for Next Meeting**

*This is an opportunity for Commuter Connections Subcommittee members to bring up other business and to request agenda items for the next meeting.*

Nicholas Ramfos, COG/TPB Staff, presented the Subcommittee with an announcement for the special hands-on virtual workshop using the bottleneck ranking tool of the RITTIS probe data analytics suite. This event will take place Thursday September 21, 2023 from 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. The workshop flyer was presented to the Subcommittee.

**The next meeting of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, November 21, 2023 at 12 noon.**